

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny Hoyer released the following statement today in recognition of the 35th celebration of Earth Day, which will be observed on Friday, April 22.

“Last week I joined students at Greenwell State Park from Leonardtown High School’s Environmental AP class. As they tested the water quality of the Patuxent River, I was impressed by both their understanding of their environment and by the enthusiasm they demonstrated while conducting their experiments.

“Earth Day reminds us of the importance of educating our young people to be stewards of our environment, and it is a reminder of our collective responsibility to protect the health of our young people by preserving our environmental surroundings for generations to come.

“Therefore, it is appropriate to celebrate the programs and protections that were put in place as a result of the Earth Day movement thirty-five years ago, which help reduce air pollution, manage growth, protect wildlife, promote soil conservation, and find new renewable energy sources. Today, the public is more environmentally literate and environmentally conscious citizens are forcing elected officials to take notice.

“As we recognize Earth Day and celebrate the steps we’ve taken to demand a safer, cleaner and healthier world, we must also recommit ourselves to achieving the goal of clean air and water for our children and our future. We have the vision for innovative technologies, the ability to produce alternative sources of energy, and an obligation to protect and fund important water quality programs. There is no doubt in my mind, we can and should be doing better.

“This week, the House of Representatives is considering a comprehensive energy bill that harms our natural resources, costs taxpayers billions of dollars, takes away consumer protections, does nothing to reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil, and will actually increase gas prices which have already risen by an average of 38 cents a gallon in the past two months.

“Essentially, Republican leaders dusted off an unacceptable bill that could not pass public scrutiny last year, instead of going back to the drawing board and making smart decisions in the best interest of our environment and nation’s security.

“Furthermore, this energy bill emerges on the heels of passage in both the House and Senate of Republican budget resolutions that devastate federal funding for environmental protection programs. The budget passed in the House of Representatives cuts \$2 billion from environmental and conservation programs for 2006 while the Senate reduces funding even further – \$670 million in additional cuts. Without a doubt, the Republican-passed budgets demonstrate a blatant disregard for environmental safeguards.

“In stark contrast, I supported a budget alternative that demonstrated a long-standing commitment to environmental conservation, protection and preservation programs and would have aided in developing additional programs to protect our natural resources.

“We have an obligation to preserve the framework of environmental law put in place 35 years ago and fight against proposals to roll back protections. Under the Bush administration, federal agencies have quietly launched an attack on environmental protection rolling back essential funds for the nation’s most important programs, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

“The health of our environment is a direct result of our commitment to its protection and preservation. We must do better to produce energy more efficiently, clean up our waterways, promote wildlife conservation, and protect our drinking water supplies.”

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